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FRONT COVER

Hole no. 9 and the clubhouse at lovely Nettle Creek Country Club, site of April's monthly golf meeting.
(Photo by Jim Trzinski)

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The Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS), founded December 24, 1926, is a professional organization whose goals include preservation and dissemination of scientific and practical knowledge pertaining to golf turf maintenance.

We endeavor to increase efficiency and economic performance while improving and enhancing the individual and collective prestige of the members.

The MAGCS member is also an environmental steward. We strive to uphold and enhance our surroundings by promoting flora and fauna in every facet in a manner that is beneficial to the general public now and in the future.

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Keeping Up With The Neighbors

The darkness was illuminated by a single spotlight, its intense beam shining on a stool positioned in the center of the room. I cautiously crept toward the stool, vaguely aware that the raised dais encircling the chamber was occupied by hooded figures silently watching my every move.

In response to the uproar from the general membership generated by the relocation issue last year, the GCSAA has decided to solicit more involvement from individual members and chapters in the decision-making process.

"Be seated," a deep and ominous voice commanded.

Arcane symbols were etched in the floor, partially obscured by the smoke and fog wafting like entrails across the cold marble. The rhythmic thud – thud – thud of machinery added an unsettling counterpoint to an eerie chant that emanated from some unseen source.

I sat.

A hammer struck a gong.

"Speak!" the voice commanded. "The Past Presidents Council will hear your report."

I babbled, then darkness descended.

I hauled my bruised and battered body from the rain-soaked ditch, and ran through the night driven by a mysterious compulsion to write these words.

Science is the smallest part of what we do!

Discover the art!

Unearth the magic!

Okay, okay, it wasn't that bad, but sitting before the group of distinguished golf course superintendents that make up the MAGCS Past Presidents Council was certainly a humbling experience. The veritable who's who of Distinguished Service Award winners, past and present GCSAA board members, Superintendent of the Year honorees and Charles Bartlett Award winners in attendance really drives home the message that the MAGCS is not just a chapter of the GCSAA, it is among THE chapters of the GCSAA. One look down the roster of past presidents indicates the longevity and tradition of our Association. I'll be honest; there is certainly motivation to measure up.

The outcome of the Past Presidents Council's meeting will be reported elsewhere, but I will comment on one of the discussion points.

So what's up with the GCSAA headquarters-relocation issue?

In response to the uproar from the general membership generated by the relocation issue last year, the GCSAA has decided to solicit more involvement from individual members and chapters in the decision-making process. The Headquarters Location Resource Group (HLRG) is independent of the GCSAA board of directors and made up of GCSAA members charged with gathering input regarding the suitability of Lawrence, Kansas as our headquarters site.

The MAGCS recently completed a survey from the HLRG requesting our chapter's opinion on:

- The GCSAA's mission, vision and goals (MVG).
- Whether headquarters relocation would advance or deter the substantial achievement of the MVG.

(continued on page 4)

The MVG are summarized below.

GCSAA's Mission, Vision and Goals

Mission

GCSAA is dedicated to serving its members, advancing their profession and enhancing the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game of golf. Vision

By 2007, GCSAA members will:

- Be recognized by employers as the key to the economic vitality of the facility.
- Be recognized by influential golfers as a key to their enjoyment of the game.
- Be recognized by the general golf public as the on-course authority regarding issues related to golf course management.
- Receive increased recognition due to GCSAA's reputation as a leading golf organization in the eyes of employers and influential golfers.
- Receive increased recognition from GCSAA's position within the golf and public policy arenas as leading golf's commitment to a positive environmental impact.

Goals

- To provide opportunities and support that enable our members to achieve career success.
- To advocate vigorously for the interests of our members, the profession and the industry.
- To deliver authoritative, accessible and affordable continuing education and provide efficient access to information on issues related to golf course management.
- To be a strategically positioned, dynamic and responsive organization.

The MAGCS Response

The Directors of the MAGCS were given the opportunity to respond to the survey questions. I reviewed the responses and sent the following letter, dated February 27, 2004, to Patrick R. Finlen, CGCS, of the HLRG.

Dear Mr. Finlen,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your survey. I canvassed our Board of Directors and by and large our response can be summarized as follows. Bear in mind that

we attempted to view the issues as a chapter; individual members of our Board of Directors may (and do) feel differently.

It is fair to say that by formulating the Mission, Vision 2007 and Goals (MVG), the GCSAA has made a conscientious attempt to develop a strategy that, if achieved, will result in the advancement of the golf course superintendent (GCS) profession.

Obstacles to the achievement of the MVG, in whole or in part, are internal and external. Internal obstacles include:

- The inherent diversity of GCS and their conditions of employment (no golf course operation is like another).
- GCSAA staff expertise, enthusiasm and motivation (service organizations prosper or decline on the backs of their people).

In terms of overcoming internal obstacles to achieve the GCSAA's MVG, our current location is suitable, if not ideal. GCSAA staff members have made their homes in Lawrence, and superintendent members across the country are equally "inconvenienced" if they need to travel to headquarters.

Would the GCSAA do a better job of internally servicing its members from another location? We think not.

External obstacles to achieving the MVG include:

- The perception that a GCS is a trade versus a profession.

Granted, great strides have been made in changing people's perception of GCS in recent years, but there is still work to do. Making the transition from "grass farmer" to "turf doctor" will continue to require a strong proactive approach on the part of our leadership. GCSAA does a good job of promoting the science of golf course management, but let's not forget about the art. There is a lot of magic in what we do.

- Provincial attitudes by affiliated organizations in the industry obstructing the notion that the ascension of the superintendent's profession is a win-win scenario for the golf industry.

Is it reasonable to expect that "external stakeholders," i.e., golf professionals, club managers, vendors, educators, architects, builders and

golfers will embrace our MVG just because we do? Do any of these groups have something to lose if we substantially achieve our MVG, and if so, can we expect some resistance?

The question then becomes: Would GCSAA be better positioned to address these "external obstacles" from a different location?

Are we ready to go through the considerable expense, staff upheaval and heartache of moving our flagship to a golf destination all for the sake of enhancing our image in the eyes of "outsiders?"

Golf is about image and prestige. Enhancing the collective prestige of GCS is arguably the single most important job GCSAA has on its plate. Would launching a headquarters move get us a better place at the table?

Go ahead and move, but no half measures. It better be the right location, it better be an awesome place and it better not interfere with member services, because the way we see it, when push comes to shove, the only reason for doing this thing is to impress the neighbors.

Sincerely,

Fred Behnke, CGCS
President, MAGCS

I am certain that the views reflected above do not represent the opinions of everybody in the MAGCS. If you disagree or have more to say on the subject, I strongly encourage you to contact the HLRG care of Mr. Finlen at 329 S. Mayfair Ave. #198, Daly City, CA 94015-1404. Or, go online to gcsaa.org/members/community/hdqrtslocation/chronology.asp and let them know your thoughts.





My Second Chance at the Microphone

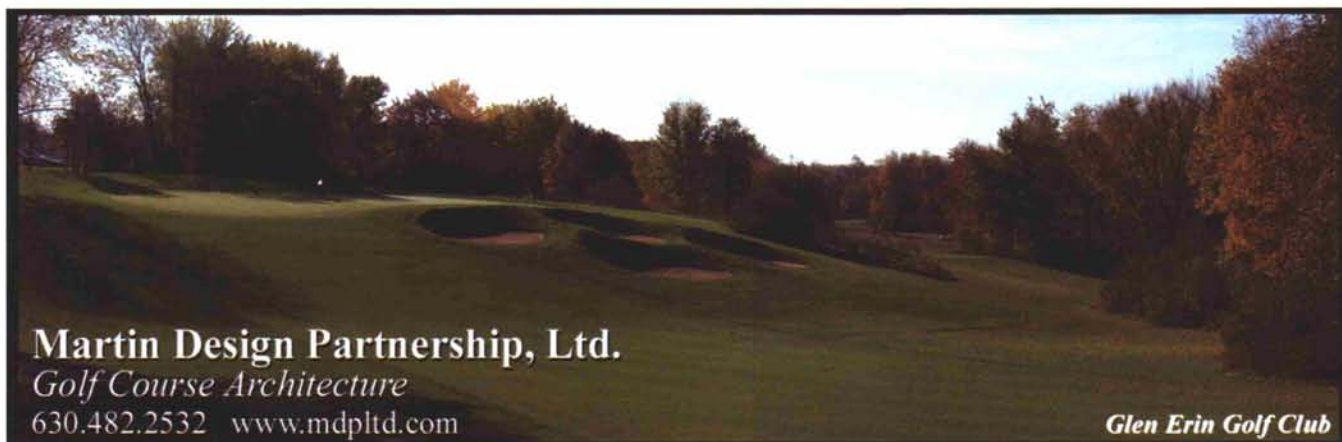
Those of you present at this year's MAGCS hospitality suite on Thursday night may remember when I missed my first chance at the microphone. Our president, Fred Behnke, was speaking and surprised me by calling my name to say a few words about the event. Of course, I avoided it at all costs. Then my mind began to play that little game I like to call "you shoulda, coulda, woulda." I missed a great opportunity to thank all of the people and companies that made the event a successful one. So here it goes . . . my second chance at the microphone, albeit the printed version.

Thanks to all the vendors participating in the Golden Tee Club for enthusiasm and financial support that exceeded expectations and made the San Diego hospitality suite so successful.

For several months prior to San Diego, I put in a lot of hours sending reminders to vendors, gathering the logos of the Golden Tee Club members and creating the PowerPoint presentation (but please don't let my boss, Pete, know). Honestly, I really enjoyed doing it. I also had help from the Commercial Advisory Council. We electronically discussed several ideas and voted to select the best ones, not easy as they were all good. The committee divided up the list of potential vendor sponsors and made calls to raise awareness and obtain pledges for the suite. I want to recognize the entire committee—Dave Nadler, Scot Spier, Marsha Traves, Steve Stewart, A.J. Huey, Sharon Reisenbeck and Chuck Odierno; I really appreciate all of your help and time! Special thanks to Sharon for her assistance at the welcome table on both nights. She was a big help with keeping the traffic flowing into the room and did a wonderful job of signing up supporters for a split-the-pot raffle to benefit the MAGCS Scholarship Fund.

It is also important that I thank Luke Cella, our executive director. Without Luke's efficiency and unbelievable multitasking ability, I would have been lost. Thanks, Luke. And let's not forget those commercial members who helped with the arrangements and staffing of the welcome table. Thanks to Tim Anderson for helping me organize the food, drinks and set-up. Thanks to Kevin DeRoo, Paul Bastron and Gary Hearn for aiding at the welcome table and playing "cashier." A special thanks to Ed Braunsky for helping me stare down potential party-crashers. You are a great bouncer, Ed!

(continued on page 6)



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Glen Erin Golf Club

Last but certainly not least—thanks to all of the vendors participating in the Golden Tee Club. Your enthusiasm, participation and financial support exceeded expectations and we cannot thank you enough. Without your support, this event would not have been possible. You're the best!

I'm almost done thanking people but I'd like to take this opportunity to say thanks to Nadler Golf, TPEC and Palatine Oil for supporting ALL of our outings and events throughout the past year.

Gosh, I feel like I just won an Oscar. . . . I'd also like to thank my husband for putting up with me and thank the Academy . . . okay, forget it.

Our party was a huge success! That's the word we're getting from superintendents, assistants and vendors. The PowerPoint presentation was a tremendous hit and everyone loved the pictures; thanks, Luke.

What was new this year: In an effort to get an estimate of the number of people in the room each night, we held a free raffle and three

members were awarded American Express gift certificates.

THURSDAY'S WINNERS

Dan Marco.....\$50
Tom Lively.....\$75
Brandon Rox.....\$100

FRIDAY'S WINNERS

Fernando Diaz.....\$50
Kevin Knudsen.....\$75
Mark Neuroth.....\$100

A count of the yellow tickets showed an average of 300 people per night.

Our split-the-pot raffle was a wonderful success! We raised \$1,500 the first night and Brian Baker of Chicagoland Turf was the lucky winner of \$750. The second night, we raised \$1,400 and Paul Vermeulen of the USGA won \$700 and donated his winnings to the ITF for turfgrass research. All in all, we raised a total of \$1,450 for the Scholarship Fund. Thanks to everyone who participated.

This year's event gave us an opportunity to honor two members of our chapter and we are so proud of and happy for them. Dan Quast received the GCSAA's Distin-

guished Service Award and Paul Voykin was named Superintendent of the Year by *Golfweek*. Congratulations, gentlemen!

And now, the final numbers. The Association raised a total of \$43,000 in vendor contributions alone! Total expenses for the event and miscellaneous items was \$43,835.28. Beverage consumption was as follows:

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Thursday.....1,482
Friday.....1,358

NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Thursday.....210
Friday.....151

Some things never change!

Thanks to everyone who made this year's Association gathering such a success. I can't wait to enjoy the sun and fun next year in Orlando.



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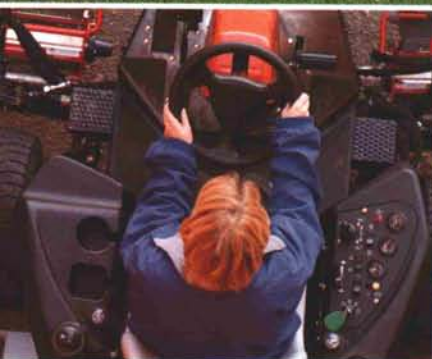
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Pat Norton -N-



The Nortons: Pat, Tommy, Sue, Megan and Ryan.



NETTLE CREEK
Country Club

The April meeting takes us to Morris, Illinois to visit Pat Norton, CGCS at Nettle Creek Country Club.



Wildflowers and native grasses are part of the landscape at Nettle Creek.

Nettle Creek is a family-owned and operated 18-hole public golf facility and golf community. It opened in 1993 and sprawls over 190 acres. The golf course strategically plays to just over 6,500 yards, winding its way through home sites and prairie land, giving the course a great golf-community feel. Nettle Creek is a links-style course and it seems that the wind plays a large role in the golf game here. This property is also home to many wild animals such as fox and pheasant; plenty of wildflower and native plant preserves appear throughout the course. The *Chicago Tribune* ranks Nettle Creek as one of the top golf courses in the area and it is not hard to imagine why.


Here at Nettle Creek, no. 11 is the signature hole. A scenic hole, it is also one of the more challenging. It requires a well-placed tee shot short of water that runs the entire left side of the fairway until it cuts across the fairway about 140 yards from the green. The water then meanders to the front of the green on the right side, posing a difficult second shot. If anyone knows no. 11, it is Pat Norton.

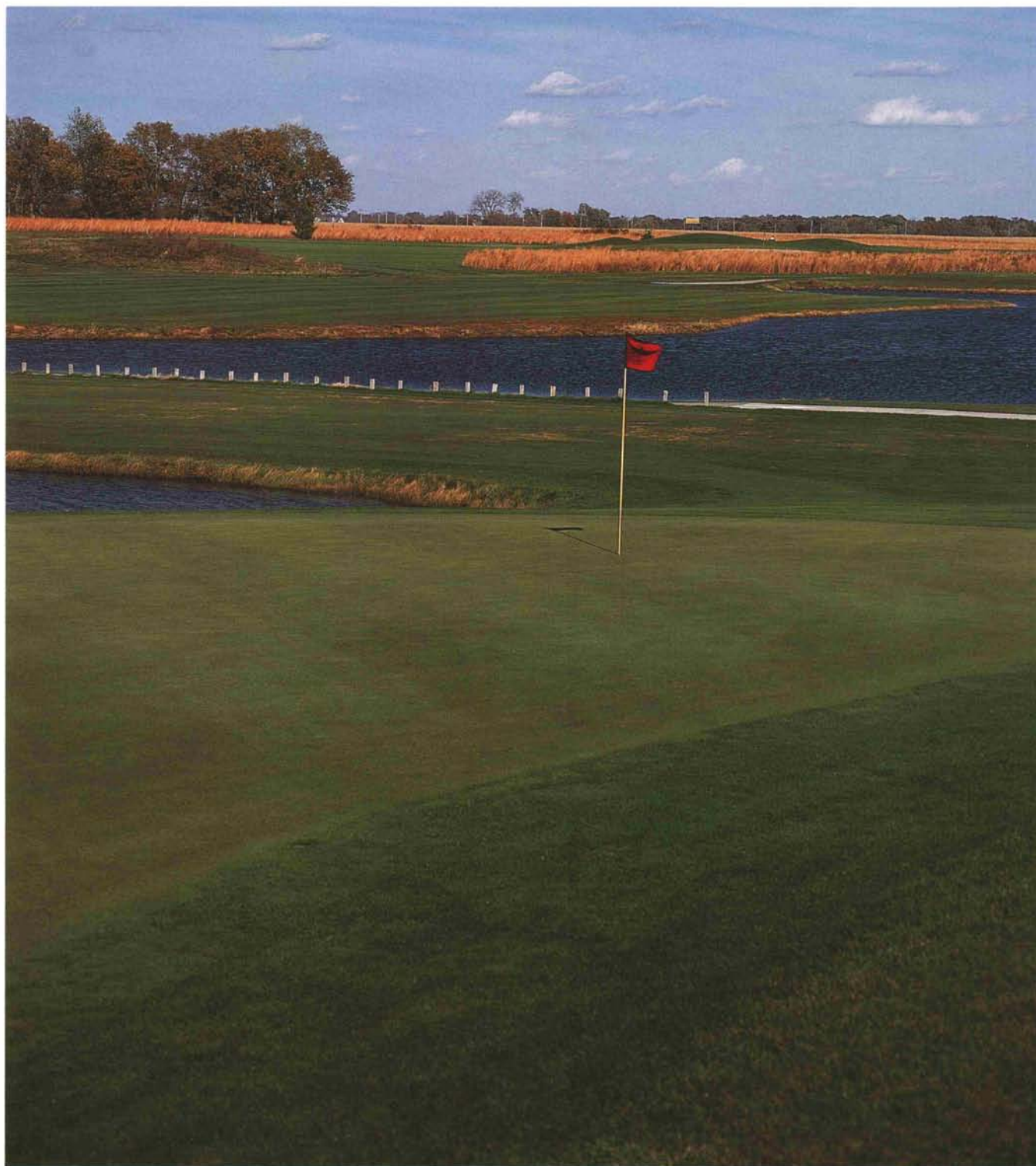
While attending the University of Wisconsin, Pat decided to switch majors and pursue his love of golf. After graduating college, Pat worked as a construction superintendent for Lohmann Golf Designs. Although he says construction was a great experience, he dreamed of having his own golf course. He moved on to Cedar Creek Country Club in Onalaska, Wisconsin as the superintendent, and then on to Nettle Creek. He became superintendent as well as vice president of operations in 1994. Playing such an integral role in operations is one of his favorite parts of the job. Another appealing aspect is the fact that his aunt and uncle own the course. Pat feels he has extraordinary freedom because of this. Along with all the benefits involved with working at Nettle Creek, there are also problems to overcome. Pat says one frustrating part of his job that many can relate to is a limited budget. Despite that obstacle, Pat Norton has done a great job at Nettle Creek.

(continued on page 10)

When not making Nettle Creek a better golf course, Pat enjoys a wide variety of other activities. Even off the course, he stays busy. He and his wife, Sue, have three children who keep them going. The oldest, Ryan, 19, is a freshman at the University of

Wisconsin and participates in ROTC. Megan, 16, is a high school sophomore; the youngest, Tommy, is 12. When not golfing, running, playing basketball or performing some home improvement, Pat enjoys watching his children play sports.

Nettle Creek provides its golf community with a beautiful and challenging course while still maintaining a family atmosphere. Just as the course is family-owned and maintained, a real family man—Pat Norton—has made this course outstanding. 



Nettle Creek's signature hole, no. 11.